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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Monday, January 14, 1935.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "Hints for Vitamin Hunters." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A

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Mid-winter is the time when the family menu-maker needs to go vitamin-hunting. If she doesn't, the meals she plans are likely to lack certain foods that the family needs for health. You see, some vitamins come easier in summer than winter. Take vitamin C, for example. You get vitamin C from fresh fruits and vegetables. When the gardens are growing in summer and you can have all the fresh things you need at minimum cost or just for the picking, you aren't likely to go short on this vitamin. But when winter comes on, and fresh vegetables aren't so plentiful and cost more, you just have to plan with care to be sure you have enough vitamin C to keep your family fit.

You remember that vitamin C is the one the scientists call the anti-scorbutic vitamin, because it protects against the disease called scurvy. Of course, not many of us nowadays are in danger of the acute form of that disease. But people are still suffering from borderline ills -- certain tooth and gum troubles and aches that they may ascribe to rheumatism, but which really come because their diet is too low in vitamin C.

Well, when you begin to plan for a proper supply of this vitamin in winter, the question of cost comes up. Planning for fresh vegetables and fruits each day sounds rather expensive, considering that many of the fresh foods are out of season in the greater part of the United States at this time of year. But there are ways of getting the necessary amount of vitamin C in fairly cheap winter meals.

Let's go over the foods that the nutritionists have found the best sources of vitamin C in order of their richness. The citrus fruits stand first and they include oranges, grapefruit, lemons, limes and tangerines, you know. Then come tomatoes -- raw or canned. Then raw cabbage and other fresh raw green leaves. Then other fresh vegetables and fruits that you eat uncooked.

Perhaps we ought to stop right here and mention one interesting characteristic of vitamin C. Heat destroys it very easily, even fairly low heat. And it is most easily destroyed in an alkaline solution, such as cooking water containing soda. You can get some vitamin C from vegetables and fruits that are cooked a very short time. But raw fresh foods are the most dependable source generally. Tomatoes are one exception to the rule. Tomatoes, either fresh or canned are rich in vitamin C. The canning process, fortunately, doesn't destroy this substance in tomatoes; in grapefruit; and in pineapple.

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Now let's do a little figuring on the cost of our vitamin C. Measure for measure, the citrus fruits are about twice as rich in this vitamin as are tomatoes, the next best source. But which are the cheapest for you will depend on the prices in your local markets. If you count an orange a day yielding a quarter of a cup of juice for each member of the family, the cost will probably be from one and a half to three cents each, or eight to fifteen cents a day for enough vitamin C for a family of five. Or you may find that half a grapefruit per person is cheaper than the orange in your locality. If you use tomatoes or tomato juice, you'll need about twice as much as citrus fruit, or half a cup of tomatoes for each person. A No. 2 can of tomatoes furnishes about two and a half cups which would be half a cup for each member of a family of five. The cost of the tomatoes will vary from about 8 to 12-1/2 cents a can, probably.

But when you have neither citrus fruit nor tomatoes at some meal during the day, you need some other dependable source of vitamin C. Raw cabbage comes in here and should be on the table often. Then you can also use other raw vegetables and fruits for variety.

Here's where good dishes like the mixed raw vegetable salad and the fresh fruit cup and the mixed raw salad stand you in good stead. These aren't just fad foods or extras or frills in the diet. They're really a very practical way of getting a food substance that we can't do without. If you don't eat citrus fruit or tomatoes, but do eat some raw vegetable or fruit each day, you've made a good start toward getting your daily quota of vitamin C, and what you get in small quantities here and there from the rest of your food will probably make up the full amount you need.

Some of the salad vegetables that you can buy in winter markets are often inexpensive. For example, there's cabbage -- about as cheap a vegetable as we have at any time. Spinach, which many people nowadays enjoy raw in salads, is another rich source of vitamin C. So are green peppers and pimientos. Then, lettuce, parsley and watercress are good sources. And so are raw turnips, raw carrots, raw onions and raw cucumbers. Among the winter fruits to supply this vitamin, remember not only the citrus fruits but also raw apples, raw bananas, raw cranberries and pineapple, either raw or canned.

Here's an important point to remember when you use these foods in vegetable cocktails, salads or fruit cups. Don't let them stand uncovered for any length of time. They lose vitamin C when their cut surfaces or juices are exposed to the air.

To save as much of the vitamin C as possible in cooked vegetables, cook as short a time as possible. For example, when you are cooking cabbage and greens, you only need to keep the kettle on long enough to wilt the leaves. And when you are cooking root vegetables, cook until just tender -- no longer, and serve at once.

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